

The Creative Environment: Incentives to and Functions of Bruges Art Production

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The relationship between art and society belongs to the most ferociously debated issues in history. We should not be too surprised at the difficulty of the task of bridging the gap between *ars* and *ratio*, on the one hand rendering artistic freedom, creativity, and taste comprehensible, and on the other giving the emotional and sensitive aspects of mankind their due place within the so-called rational Western society. While it had been commonly accepted that artistic production generally developed during periods of economic well-being, the noted economic historian Roberto Lopez inverted this correlation by stating in a famous lecture at The Metropolitan Museum of Art more than forty years ago that "hard times" furthered "investment in culture."¹ Every detail of his argument has been scrutinized since then. Economic historians diversified their concepts of business trends and abandoned the overall notion of an "age of depression" as applied to the late Middle Ages in Europe at large.² Regional developments are now seen as contradictory and often as complementary: shifts of activities created depression in one region but growth in another.

The question of the relationship between economy and culture remains more complex. In a recent evaluation of the matter, the economic historian Wilfried Brulez concluded that the whole discussion rested on a *faux problème*, a question formulated in the wrong way.³ In this paper, I will argue that, indeed, a solid analysis requires more than a crude correlation between the general business trend and investment in culture. Moreover, the reduction of the problem of artistic production to a shift in investment strategies is unacceptable. Other factors, such as the structure of production and that of demand have to be considered as well. These imply notions of the form and function of the products, which are related to values and taste. Not only economic, but also social, political, and cultural dimensions are required for

an adequate theory of the relationship between art and society. Leaving aside these aspects cripples any discussion of the factors influencing artistic production. The tendency toward such a reductionist approach, as shown by some economic historians or sociologists, explains the limited response they received from art historians.⁴ However, since the questions raised are absolutely fundamental, we cannot leave the discussion as it stands now. Historians have refined their questions; art historians have entered into matters of market and patronage. Can we try to bring the two approaches closer to each other, concentrating on fifteenth-century Bruges?

To start with, a full awareness of the social and mental context within which both producers and buyers of works of art operated is fundamental. The productive structure was corporative, authorized by the city government, which bestowed on the crafts a constitution and an organizational model. It provided for the training of apprentices and prescribed entrance fees, which were differentiated by the person's birth as a master's son, a burgher of Bruges, a Fleming, or a foreigner. Prices, wages, production techniques, the duration of the training, and the requirements for the admission to the master's rank were regulated in the same manner as they were for all other crafts. The three-level structure of apprentice, journeyman, and master had to guarantee the quality of the products and enable the craft members to monopolize the market. Besides being governed by the social and economic regulations, the crafts played a role in the political life of the city, its military organization, and the religious and civic festivals.⁵

No special provisions were made for artists. In the universities a similar pattern of three levels and a division into professional sectors was to be found, but the universities were under the particular protection of the pope and thus remained largely independent of local author-

ities. In the fifteenth-century Low Countries, however, artists were by no means distinguished from other craftsmen. They were incorporated in various crafts, together with various other professional groups. In Bruges, the painters belonged to the same craft as the sculptors, cloth painters, glaziers, mirror makers, saddlers, and horse-collar makers. The woodcutters and organ builders were incorporated with the carpenters, who fought bitter competence quarrels with the cabinetmakers, who had a craft of their own.⁶ In Ghent, the woodcutters formed a craft with the painters, while the stonecutters were grouped with the masons. All these formations differed locally, making it very clear that no concept was extant of "the artist" as having an occupation different from that of other artisans. Local crafts regulated and meticulously controlled the quality of both the materials and the craftsmanship of the products delivered by their members. One contract concluded between an English merchant and the painter Jan van den Heer even contained a provision that the price of the altarpiece he commissioned would be reduced if the inspectors of the craft should declare the finished product of inferior quality in relation to the agreed price.⁷ The remark by John Michael Montias that "the idea of the quality of a work of art seems to have been far more precise at the end of the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance than later on" may be explained by the application of craft regulations.

In contemporary Italy, where the word *arte* had equally designated crafts in industry and in the arts and crafts, the fifteenth century saw the evolution of the professional artist trained with ancient models in the academies. This new concept of training went along with the systematic reorientation of the style toward the imitation of classical models and the more sophisticated, self-conscious vision of the role of the artist.⁸ Isolated elements of the Italian Renaissance concept, such as the introduction by Petrus Christus of one-point perspective, penetrated the Low Countries in the course of the fifteenth century. Only during the first decades of the sixteenth century did Renaissance concepts, including stylistic features and an outspoken preference for humanistic themes, become prevalent as a coherent system.

In the Low Countries, neither the training nor the self-consciousness of the artist differed

from those of craftsmen in general; even their wages were equal to those of other trained craftsmen such as masons or carpenters. In the Bruges tax lists of 1394-96 covering three of the six city quarters, nine members of the image makers and saddlers craft belonged to the lowest tax category, and two belonged to the next lowest, a social stratification very close to that of the total population. Among some 1,200 taxpayers whose professional activities could be traced, 83.14 percent belonged to the lowest and 13.92 percent to the second lowest categories; 2.20 percent and 0.63 percent belonged to the two highest tax categories. Among the latter 2.83 percent of the population no painters and saddlers were found.⁹ Admittedly, the central Saint John's quarter, which may have shown a rather different social structure, is missing in the fiscal documentation. It is equally to be observed that the situation may have changed considerably after 1394-96, as a consequence of Bruges's considerable economic growth during the following century. Anyhow, the available documents show the close similarity of the social position of artists with that of other craftsmen in late fourteenth century Bruges. The system of production and training in workshops formed a typical part of this corporative structure. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, however, the Bruges building industry saw the emergence, within the corporative system, of entrepreneurs operating on a larger scale and on a capitalistic basis. Similar exceptionally successful craftsmen breaking through the corporative regulations could be found in other sectors and other cities as well.¹⁰ Some painters obviously were among those exceptions who could take some liberties, unlike dozens of their fellow craftsmen.

The recruitment of the Bruges crafts rather precisely reflected the demand for specific types of labor. The city accounts registered each year the inscription fees of new *poorters*, the fully privileged citizens. Not every new inhabitant could or would afford the payment of the fee, but all new members of the crafts had to comply. During most of the fifteenth century, the amount of the fee was six pounds *parisis* for Flemings and twelve for foreigners, or the equivalent of respectively ten and a half or twenty-one days' wages of a skilled craftsman.¹¹ In 1441, Duke Philip the Good ordered a sub-

stantial reduction of the inscription fees for both citizens and craft members, as a clear incentive to revitalize the city after the great revolt of 1436–38, the economic blockade, the famine, and the subsequent plague. It is interesting to take a closer look at the text of the duke's ordinance, promulgated on 4 February 1441.¹²

Expounding the motives for his extraordinary measure, the duke declares to have in view the common weal of his city which had been greatly troubled and gone badly astray. Wanting to have it governed correctly, he proposed to put an end to bad customs, especially those concerning the entry fees and admission duties in the mechanical crafts. In his view, the excessive duties imposed by these organizations had discouraged people from moving toward Bruges and becoming incorporated in a craft. This added to the effects of the recent plague and many other troubles that had greatly impoverished and depopulated the city. In order to attract artisans from any nation or place, he reduced the citizenship fee, for four years from that date, to five shillings of Flemish groats¹³ and the entry fee in any craft to twenty of the same shillings. He also forbade any of the customary duties, such as offering a dinner, and any distinction as to the place or manner of the apprenticeship. Moreover, the duke granted the new *poorters* freedom from the fine newly imposed after the revolt. At the end of the four-year period, in January 1445, a completely new legislation was imposed on the crafts.¹⁴ It is clear that the four-year reductions were closely connected with the measures concerning the regulation of the crafts in general. A striking aspect is the temporary elimination of the discrimination against foreigners and other outsiders in the craft. During the years 1441 to 1445, all had to pay the same amount of 300 groats for citizenship and craft membership together. This sum was the equivalent of twenty-six and a half days' wages of a master craftsman. From January 1445 onward, the old distinctions were reintroduced, more than doubling the duties for Flemings and more than tripling them for foreigners, who then had to pay as much as eighty-seven days', or nearly four months', wages.¹⁵

Table 1 Entry fees for citizenship and craft membership in Bruges, in Flemish groats

Flemings			Foreigners			
	Citizen	Craft	Total	Citizen	Craft	Total
1441-45	60	240	300	60	240	300
1445-	120	506	626	240	746	986

Understandably, the duke's measures had a strong effect on the immigration to Bruges in those years. From 1436 to 1440, an average of 79 new citizens were registered each year. Those were the catastrophic years. From 1441 to 1444, under the reduced fees, a yearly average of 403 persons were registered as new citizens. During the next four years, under the high fees, the yearly average dropped to 158.¹⁶ During the four years' reduction, in all 1,614 new citizens immigrated to Bruges, who, following the text of the ordinance, were to be new craftsmen.

The immigrant Petrus Christus thus obviously belonged to a general trend. He registered on 6 July 1444, during the last year of reduced fees.¹⁷ I would like to stress the fact that the duke's policy was aiming at attracting skilled craftsmen from anywhere, offering the greatest reductions to foreigners—to one fourth for the citizen's fee and to less than one third for the crafts' inscription. Close reading of the *Poortboek* permits one to observe that the craft of a new *poorter* is mentioned only in some cases, and in such a way as to make clear that it was the immigrant's intention to pursue that particular craft in accordance with the ordinance. The combination of the birthplace with the eventual mention of the craft taught me that the craft was mentioned for two categories of people only: for the immigrants from the *Brugse Lande*, the rural district around Bruges, who needed permission to leave their village, and for those born outside the county of Flanders. Since the entry concerning Petrus Christus mentions that he purchased citizenship "in order to be a painter," his birthplace, Baerle, can only be the village in Brabant, halfway between Breda and Turnhout.¹⁸ On his journey of about a hundred miles to Bruges, he would have had to pass through Ghent, where he may have seen some of van Eyck's works. We do not, however, need to refer to Jan's reputation to understand why Petrus Christus was one of the 1,614 artisans of every

kind who at that time took advantage of the temporary reduction of fees to move to Bruges.

Table 2: New *poorters* in Bruges, yearly averages per decade¹⁹

1400-9	81	1450-59	165
1410-19	153	1460-69	159
1420-29	239	1470-79	127
1430-39	132	1480-89	100
1440-49	233	1490-99	66

Looking at the yearly averages of immigration in Bruges per decade during the fifteenth century, one notices that the 1420s and 1440s marked the absolute apex of the attraction of the Bruges labor market. In the 1430s, the economic difficulties with England, the revolt of 1436-38, the blockade by the German Hanse, and the plague struck the city severely.²⁰ The whole period from 1410 to the early 1470s showed a strong immigration. This coincided with a general tendency toward increasing the wages in the crafts by about 14 percent.²¹ After the revolt of the 1480s, the evolution went steadily downward. The proportion of immigrants from outside the county of Flanders or from a distance of more than thirty miles is remarkably high: 53 percent in the peak years 1440-59, 46.5 percent in 1420-39, 44.5 percent in 1460-69, 38 percent in 1390-1419. Thus, the greater the number of immigrants, the farther they traveled. Comparison with the town of Oudenaarde, located some thirty miles southeast of Bruges, reveals how exceptionally attractive Bruges was. During the fifteenth century, 50 percent of the migrants to Oudenaarde traveled less than six miles, and only 11.6 percent traveled more than thirty miles or came from abroad.²²

The distribution by occupational sector of the immigrants of Bruges, as it can be computed for the period from 1331 to 1375, shows that the percentage of immigrants engaged in arts and crafts and clothing crafts double the percentage of those in the same occupations in the total population, while, for example, the building industry was underrepresented.²³ And from 1466 to 1496, 31 percent of the new masters of the image makers' craft were immigrants.²⁴ The specialized crafts thus exerted a special attraction to migrant artisans until the end of the fifteenth century.

Table 3: Professional sectors of the largest groups of immigrants

	% population 1394-96	% immigrants 1331-75
Textile	15.1	18.7
Building	14.5	11.9
Clothing	12.5	26.2
Arts	7.3	13.4

The effect of the decrease in the immigration figures, which reflects the economic regression after 1475, can be observed in detail from the registration of new members in the craft of the image makers, thanks to the studies by Sosson and Martens.²⁵

Table 4: New members of the image makers' craft

	Masters		Apprentices	
	Number	Average per year	Number	Average per year
1454-1475	177	8	215	10
1476-1530	227	4	169	3

The downward tendency of the business trend²⁶ led to a strong decrease in the registration of new members in the image makers' craft, which fell to half the level during the golden age for the masters, and to even less than one third for the apprentices. While 60 percent of the masters of the 1454-75 period taught at least one apprentice in their workshop, this proportion fell to a mere 23 percent afterward. The obvious effects were (1) the overall decrease by more than 50 percent of the number of image makers active in Bruges after 1475; (2) the near doubling of the workshops consisting of one master only; (3) the concentration of apprentices from an average of two for each master who had apprentices at some time in his career in 1454-75 to 3.25 in 1476-1530. In this picture, the position of the journeymen remains unclear. Following Martens's observation that a large majority of the apprentices did not reach the status of master, one has to note that most masters employed one journeyman. This leads to the conclusion that during Bruges's golden age the typical workshop included besides the

master a journeyman and an apprentice for some years, with about 40 percent of the masters working alone. After 1475, the vast majority of the masters must have remained alone, while less than a quarter employed a journeyman and an apprentice. Considering the high numbers involved, it is very unlikely that all those one-master workshops were owned by painters of the highest talents. Many of them must have formed part of some kind of division-of-labor system, such as functioned in the textile industries, limiting themselves to decorative tasks. It has been shown that carpenters, panel painters, and image painters divided the work for the larger altarpieces typical of the Low Countries in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Ready-made standardized elements were inserted in the finished product. This method allowed artists to save time and deliver larger quantities of products at the moment when demand peaked during the fairs. It did not, however, reduce costs in such a way as to prohibit adaptations to the customers' taste.²⁷

The quantitative data presented above obviously offer interesting possibilities for the interpretation of the technical and artistic quality of paintings. It seems plausible to launch the hypothesis that within the same sector of crafts, artisans may have reacted to the pressure of the market in a generally similar way. Or were there any reasons, technical or other, to suppose different procedures among the painters? The increased differentiation between one-master workshops and those including a journeyman and apprentices must be recognizable in the characteristics of their products, and possibly also in their prices. The important results shown by the technical analysis of the wooden panels and of the underdrawings feed the hope that the application of adequate research methods will continue to bring new results.

So far, we have focused on the production side of the process. If we turn now to demand, we have to stress that Bruges was a really exceptional center since it combined the presence of a court with that of a rich commercial bourgeoisie, an exceptionally large community of foreign merchants, and an extraordinarily well-to-do and broad middle class.²⁸ The role of the court was overwhelming at certain moments, but should not be overestimated in the long run, especially since the dukes spent only limited periods of time in their *prinsenhof*. The con-

tinuity of art patronage was to be found among the local elites and institutions.²⁹ Bruges was one of the largest cities of northwestern Europe, with possibly about 40,000 inhabitants by 1470. It contributed 15.7 percent of the subsidies paid by the county of Flanders to its ruler. Ghent's share amounted to 13.8 percent, while its population was considerably higher, at least in the middle of the fourteenth century, when we have reliable estimates. Moreover, one seventh of the Bruges's indirect taxes on trade flowed into the duke's treasury. All this makes it highly probable that Bruges paid more taxes than that of Ghent, and that it could afford to do so since its individual income was so much higher. That again can be explained by its economic structure, more commercial than industrial, and by the fact that its crafts included so many relatively capital-intensive, specialized activities.³⁰

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Bruges was certainly the most prominent commercial city of northwestern Europe, offering hospitality to hundreds of foreign merchants from all over Europe. The exact number of those of the German Hanse have been traced for the years 1363 to 1380. Throughout these years, forty to fifty Hanse merchants resided in Bruges: several of them owned or rented houses in the city, others lived in the famous inns. During spring, when the fair was held, their numbers doubled.³¹ The pattern may well have been the same for all foreign nations: a core group residing for some years, and at least as many sailing in for the fair. This combination of continuity and change meant that a great number of foreign merchants regularly passed weeks, months, or years in the city and thus had occasion to learn of the broad variety of its opportunities. To quote the merchant Pero Tafur from Córdoba, writing in 1437 (quoted by R. Vaughan in *Philip the Good* [London, 1970] pp. 244–45):

Bruges is a great and very rich city and one of the most important markets of the world.... All nations meet here and one says that on some days more than 700 ships leave the harbour.... Income is very high in Bruges and the inhabitants are very rich. Anybody who has money to spend will find here products from all over the world.

The foreign merchants had corporate buildings belonging to their nations, particular chapels for their religious services, and private

houses. All these were concentrated in a few blocks of houses around three marketplaces north of the Great Market. The Italians were most concentrated around Beurze Square, the Iberians had their quarters beyond the canal around Biscay Square, the Scots and the English were located in the next streets, the Hanse resided one street beyond. The proximity of all these merchants' houses and inns must have facilitated contacts on a purely commercial level as well as on that of conviviality and devotion.³² In this atmosphere, trade negotiations may well have followed exchanges about artistic products.

There is proof indeed that altarpieces and sculptures in wood were displayed during the three "show days" of the fair, since on that occasion even products from outside Bruges were allowed in for sale. During the fair, which lasted for thirty days beginning the third Monday after Easter, free trade in raw materials for painters was allowed without the intervention of a local broker. An ordinance of 1432 allowed woodcutters and organ builders to work on the eve of festivals and during the night to finish the work when they had a contract with merchants who were eager to sail off. It is unlikely, however, that other products of art than those in wood were offered for sale at the fair. The image makers' craft insisted on having their members exhibit their works in shops and at counters, and it was only in 1482 that the Bruges Saint Nicholas guild had a special *pand* constructed for the exposition of works of art.³⁴

Two factors may explain these different selling methods. It may be that the standardization of sculpture in wood allowed production for an anonymous and large market, largely abroad. Even then, the 1432 ordinance for the woodcutters and organ builders suggests that foreign merchants struck contracts during the "show days" in the beginning of the fair, for products to be finished before they sailed—that is, within a month. This implies a direct personal contact between the artist and the buyers, who chose on the basis of the models displayed on the fair, but had the products specially made—during thirty days and nights—to their order. The market may have been anonymous, but the merchants acted through direct personal contact.³⁵ On the other hand, book production was equally largely standardized for the

external markets but not offered at the fair. One should not forget that, unless stalls in the great city hall could be used, weather conditions from April to early June could be harmful for paintings on oak, cloth, or parchment.

Maximiliaan Martens has convincingly shown that religious confraternities may have been the organizations where the various segments of the Bruges elite, from the court and the nobility to the foreign merchants and the local officials, could meet artists—including Petrus Christus—who were eager to accept their patronage.³⁶ The same pattern has been revealed for other Flemish cities as well.³⁷ The richness of the Bruges middle classes allowed them to participate in art patronage. We have to stress that the period from 1440 to about 1470/75 has to be considered exceptionally prosperous, especially in Bruges. That was exactly the time of Petrus Christus's career. Real wages were at their highest level in four centuries, thanks to the advanced economy, wide commercial networks, political and monetary stability, and relatively low taxation. In Bruges, the center of the economy of northwestern Europe, work was abundant in specialized trades, services, arts, and crafts. The immigration of 230 to 240 artisans per year during the 1420s and 1440s may imply that, adding their families and the unregistered immigrants, the yearly influx was about a thousand per year. They were attracted, even from great distances, by high wages: in 1465, a mason in Bruges might earn in real terms 2.4 times as much as his colleague in Haarlem.³⁸ No wonder that corporations flourished and were prepared to invest in culture.

Jean-Pierre Sosson has shown that during the fifteenth century the Bruges crafts in the building sector went through a process of aristocratization. A small elite combined the political representation of the crafts with large-scale entrepreneurship facilitated by their political power. In other words, they used their representative functions on behalf of fellow craftsmen to undermine corporate solidarity for their own profit. These social climbers may have been very prone to imitate the behavior of the established elites, not only in politics but also in culture.

More generally, a hypothesis could be formulated as follows. The density of the social network at Bruges made possible close con-

tacts between very different social categories, from courtiers to deans of crafts. The social distance between a nobleman and an artisan was in daily practice smaller here than in less populated and less cosmopolitan regions. In this environment, new information and ideas circulated rapidly, as it was of prime importance for merchants to be aware of the latest developments on the markets and trade routes all over Europe. Flemings, and the citizens of Bruges and Ghent in particular, had developed a strong self-confidence through centuries of political struggle in defense of their autonomy. They evidently were aware of their economic assets, which often were at the heart of conflicts. In this environment, where different cultures, languages, political forces, and economic systems met, the expression of one's identity was more relevant than in a less diversified one. Artistic media allow people to express identity and status in a more indirect, more refined way than by a sheer display of power and wealth. The more sophisticated the message, the more impressive it is for a cultivated observer. Following Montias, one could add that the most expensive works of art were those commissioned by patrons who wanted the representation to be personalized, eventually by the inclusion of their portraits.⁴⁰ Once the climate has turned to such "cultural" expressions of status and identity, imitations may follow and multiply in turn, until standardized, cheaper copies are produced in large quantities. This in turn degrades the original expression to banality and provokes those having the necessary means at their disposal to stimulate the creation of new forms of expression.

If this hypothesis is accepted, it may offer the answer to a series of deadlocks in the art and society debate. Of course, a high level of capital accumulation is a necessary precondition for any active center of artistic creation. The investment in added value without any direct utility is to be expected only when a sufficient surplus is available. But this certainly is not a sufficient condition: prosperity does not automatically produce art, and the choice of a particular type of product depends on the prevailing ambience. One has to take into account that Bruges had been an international commercial city since the thirteenth century and that investment in culture in that period had primarily been oriented toward building

impressive churches, walls, gates, and trading halls. In that time more capital was probably invested in public buildings than during the next two centuries. Once they existed, however, a further step could be taken. Only when an elite chooses artistic means to express its status will artistic creativity attain momentum. Then striving social groups convert productive capital into symbolic capital. A favorable business cycle helps the middle classes to participate by imitation in the movement toward investment in culture; their very participation enlarges the market for art products and attracts more artists, and thus probably also the best ones. The high concentration of artists enhances the competition between them and thus the search for conspicuous performances. At the same time, large-scale production reduces the distinctive value of the original artistic forms and provokes the taste for innovation among the wealthiest patrons. The best conditions for artistic creation seem thus to be found in the socially most diversified and economically most advanced cities; continuity and stability of social and economic conditions are required, as well as the acceptance in the society of the artistic way of communication.

What about "hard times," then? It is obvious that they reduce the demand for artistic production among the middle classes. Hence the number of producers will have to fall dramatically, as we have seen in Bruges after 1475. This accounts for the drying up of the stream of immigrants, most of whom from then onward preferred Antwerp with its growing opportunities. In the arts and crafts, reactions to the recession were not different from those in other sectors, such as the textile industry.⁴¹ Concentration in fewer workshops, of which some employed cheap labor, allowed for specialization and differentiation of production. A limited high-quality market was thus paralleled by one of cheaper standardized products. It is an accepted view in economic history that some economic functions remained active in bypassed core cities, such as Bruges in the early sixteenth century. Banking especially remained located for some decades in the former metropolis. Moreover, accumulated capital largely stayed in the city, often even concentrated in fewer hands.⁴² Here, Lopez's thesis may apply, albeit for different reasons than those he put forward. The former commercial elite will have turned

into a rentier class and preferred, for social rather than for economic reasons, to invest in conspicuous artistic consumption with the aim of enhancing its status, perhaps on its way toward nobility.

The analysis of the identity of patrons, the display of religious and heraldic symbols and references to their personal achievements, the realism of their representation, and their prominence within a given (still mostly religious) subject are essential to understanding the social function attributed to paintings. The precise analysis of painting techniques displayed in the magnificent catalogue of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's *Petrus Christus* exhibition is to be recommended with a view to attaining an answer to the question of the quality of artistic production, comparing periods of prosperity with those of contraction. Does serial work in larger workshops flatten the quality, since more is done by less-qualified people? Do we have to distinguish split markets, with a continued high-quality production for the reduced, but still very actively patronizing, elite? Does innovation in form and content stagnate as soon as the rivalry between ambitious and fervently interacting patrons slows down? There are still enough questions for stimulating debate between historians and art historians.

- less than 1% of the total
- more than 1%, up to 5%
- more than 5%, up to 10%
- more than 10%, up to 15%
- between 20% and 25%
- between 25% and 30%

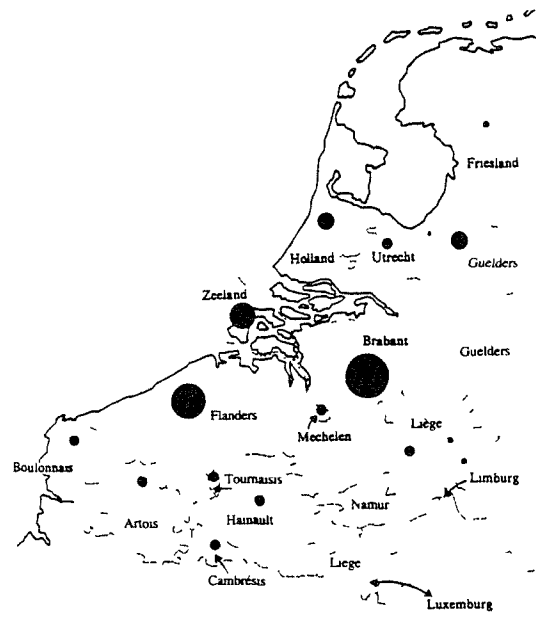


Figure 1 Regional origins of the 173 newly registered members of the Bruges building crafts, 1418-50 (from Sosson *Travaux publics*, p. 334)

NOTES

1. Roberto S. Lopez, "Hard Times and Investment in Culture," Metropolitan Museum of Art, ed. *The Renaissance: Six Essays* (New York, 1962) pp. 29–54.
2. John H. Munro, "Economic Depression and the Arts in the Fifteenth-Century Low Countries," *Renaissance and Reformation* 19 (1983) pp. 235–250.
3. W. Brulez, *Cultuur en Getal: Aspecten van de relatie economie-maatschappij-cultuur in Europa tussen 1400 en 1800* (Amsterdam, 1986) pp. 84–88.
4. For an excellent recent discussion of these problems, see Michael North, *Kunst und Kommerz im Goldenen Zeitalter: Zur Sozialgeschichte der niederländischen Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Cologne/Weimar/Vienna, 1992) pp. 3–23.
5. An exemplary study is that by J. P. Sosson, *Les Travaux publics de la ville de Bruges XII^e-XV^e siècles: Les matériaux, Les hommes* (Brussels, 1977) pp. 131–201.
6. J. P. Sosson, "Une approche des structures économiques d'un métier d'art: La corporation des peintres et selliers de Bruges (XV^e-XVI^e siècles)," *Revue des archéologues et historiens d'art de Louvain*, 3 (1970) pp. 91–100.
7. John Michael Montias, "Le Marché de l'art aux Pays-Bas, XV^e et XVI^e siècles," *Annales. Economies—sociétés—civilisations* 48, no. 6 (November–December 1993) pp. 1558–1559 (with reference to the unpublished work by Lynn Jacobs).
8. Bram Kempers, *Kunst, macht en mecenaat* (Amsterdam, 1987) pp. 231–247, 326–351; also available in German trans. *Kunst, Macht und Mäzenatentum: der Beruf des Malers in der italienischen Renaissance* (Munich, 1989).
9. Ingrid De Mever, "De sociale structuren te Brugge in de 14^e eeuw," W. Blockmans et al., *Studien betreffende de sociale structuren te Brugge, Kortrijk en Gent in de 14^e en 15^e eeuw. Standen en Leden* 54 (Heule, 1971) pp. 12, 36, 52, 55.
10. J. P. Sosson, "Quelques aspects sociaux de l'artisanat bruxellois du métal," *Cahiers Bruxellois* 6 (1961) pp. 98–122, and idem, "L'Artisanat bruxellois du métal: Hiérarchie sociale, salaires et puissance économique (1360–1500)," *ibid.* 7 (1962) pp. 225–258.
11. Summer wages were raised from 10 to 12 groats per day for most crafts in the building industry at different moments: in 1429 for the slaters, in 1434 for the pavers, in 1442–50 for the masons, in 1446 for the carpenters, in 1450 for the thatchers. I calculated an average day-wage in the middle of the century on the basis of two-thirds summer and one-third winter wages, resulting in 11 (case fraction 1/3) groats; see Sosson, *Travaux publics*, pp. 300–303. My calculation corrects that by Maximiliaan P. J. Martens, "Petrus Christus: A Cultural Biography," in Maryan W. Ainsworth and Maximiliaan P. J. Martens, *Petrus Christus*, exhib. cat. (New York, 1994) p. 20, n. 10.
12. *Poortboek* 1434–50, fol. 23–24v. Stadsarchief, Bruges. The text was published with some reading errors by R. A. Parmentier, *Indices op de Brugsche Poortboeken*, 2 vols. (Bruges, 1938) vol. 2, *Annexes*, pp. 5–8; to be read in connection with the reintroduction of the previous high tariffs by the city aldermen on 25 January 1445, on pp. 8–9.
13. I regret having to correct on this point both E. Thoen, "Immigration to Bruges in the Late Middle Ages," *Le migrazioni in Europa secc. XIII-XV III: Atti della 20a settimana di studi, Istituto di storia economica Francesco Datini* (Prato, 1993) p. 339, who mentions 12 instead of 3 pounds *parisis* for foreigners in 1441–45; and Martens, "Petrus Christus," pp. 15 and 195. The former mentions 12 pounds *parisis* as the citizenship fee for foreigners in 1441–45, but as the pound *parisis* was equal to only 20 groats, and a shilling was 12 groats, the actual figure was 3 pounds *parisis*. Martens uses the correct figure but assumed that the city accounts were in pounds groats, rather than pounds *parisis*; city accounts were usually made up in pounds groats, but in this case, as in some other instances when goods are mentioned, the archaic pounds *parisis* must have been meant. Thus the citizen fees, for both Flemings and foreigners, for the years 1441 to 1445 amounted to 3 pounds *parisis*, or 20 groats each, equal to the 5 shillings groats mentioned in the ordinance. From 1445–46 onward, the fees amounted to 6 pounds for Flemings and 12 pounds for foreigners. See the city accounts in the Stadsarchief, Bruges, or in the Algemeen Rijksarchief, Brussels.
14. Sosson, *Travaux publics*, pp. 58–60, 136–141.
15. Parmentier, *Indices*, vol. 2, *Annexes*, pp. 8–9.
16. Calculated from A. Jamees, *Brugse poorters*, 4 vols. (Handzame, 1974–80) vol. 2, 1, p. ii.
17. Ainsworth and Martens, *Petrus Christus*, p. 195.
18. Compare Ainsworth and Martens, *Petrus Christus*, pp. 15, 55–56. To take only one example, fol. 72v of the *Poortboek* mentioning Petrus Christus lists eleven entries, of which five mention a craft. One man from Moerkerke, in the *Brugse Vrije*, expresses the intention of becoming a tanner and brings an "issue" letter; the four others come from Goes in Zeeland (a tradesman), Borgloon in the Land of Liège (a maker of chasubles), Baerle (a painter) and Dongen near Breda (another tradesman). The six other entries concern people born in parts of the county of Flanders outside the *Brugse Vrije*, and make no mention of their craft. The *Poortboek* is, from what I have observed, absolutely consistent in making this distinction.
19. Thoen, "Immigration," p. 337.
20. Richard Vaughan, *Philip the Good: The Apogee of Burgundy* (London, 1970) pp. 87–92.
21. To be precise a 20 percent increase of the summer wages, which amounted to 13.8 percent on a yearly basis if the summer wages accounted for two thirds of the total income: Sosson, *Travaux publics*, p. 226.
22. Thoen, "Immigrants," pp. 347–348.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 348–350, and De Mever, "Sociale structuren," p. 36 (with the statistical reservations formulated above after note 9).
24. Albert Schouteet, *De Vlaamse primitieven te Brugge; Bronnen voor de schilderkunst te Brugge tot de dood van Gerard David, I* (Brussels, 1989) p. 9; Maximiliaan P. J. Martens, *Artistic Patronage in Bruges Institutions, ca. 1440–1482*, (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1992; University Microfilms).
25. Sosson, "Une approche"; Martens, *Artistic Patronage*.
26. W. Prevenier and W. Blockmans, *The Burgundian Netherlands* (Antwerp–Cambridge, 1985) pp. 191–196.
27. Montias, "Le marché," pp. 1549–1551, 1559.
28. W. Blockmans, "Bruges the European Commercial Centre," in *Bruges and Europe*, ed. V. Vermeersch (Antwerp, 1992) pp. 40–55, and other chapters in this book.

29 Lorne Campbell 'The Art Market in the Southern Netherlands in the Fifteenth Century' *The Burlington Magazine* 118 (April 1976) pp 188–198

30 W. Prevener 'Bevolkingscijfers en professionele structuren der bevolking van Gent en Brugge in de 14de eeuw' *Album Charles Leclercq* (Ghent 1975) pp 269–305; W. Blockmans and W. Prevener 'Under the Sign of Burgundy' (in print)

31 W. Paravicini 'Bruges and Germany' in Vermeersch ed. *Bruges and Europe* pp 100–114

32 W. P. Blockmans 'Urban Space in the Low Countries 13th–16th Centuries' in *Spazio urbano e organizzazione economica nell'Europa medievale* ed A. Gironimi (Perugia 1994) pp 170–175

33 M. Vinroose 'Twee onbekende 15de-eeuwse documenten in verband met de Brugse beeldenmaakt' *Handelingen van het Genootschap Soevereiniteit en Brugge* 110 (1973) pp 168–178

34 Martens 'Artistic Patronage' Montias 'Le Marche' p 1555

35 Ainsworth and Martens *Petrus Christus* pp 17–19

36 Maximilian P. J. Martens 'New Information on Petrus Christus' Biography and the Patronage of His Brussels *Lumination: Symposium* 20 no 1 (1993–94) p 5–23; idem 'Petrus Christus'

37 H. Pleij 'De meesterspreken van 1511' (Amsterdam 1988) pp 151–191

38 W. P. Blockmans 'The Economic Expansion of Holland and Zeeland in the Fourteenth–Sixteenth Centuries' in *Studia Historica Oeconomica Literaria Annorum Hermani in de Wec* ed E. Aerts et al (Leuven 1995) pp 47–48

39 Sossion *Trinities publi* pp 189–202

40 Montias 'Le Marche' pp 1545–1546

41 J. Vermaat 'Structural Transformation in a Textile Centre: Bruges from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century' in *The Rise and Decline of Urban Industry in Italy and in the Low Countries (Late Middle Ages–Early Modern Time)* ed Hermen van der Wee (Leuven 1988) pp 187–192; H. van der Wee 'Industrial Dynamics and the Process of Urbanization in the Low Countries from the Late Middle Ages to the Eighteenth Century: A Synthesis' in *ibid* pp 323–347

42 W. Brulcz 'Bruges and Antwerp in the 15th and 16th Centuries: An Antithesis' *Acta Historiae Neerlandicae* 6 (The Hague 1973) pp 1–20

43 Brulcz in *Culture en verfil* p 57 sampled paintings from the Low Countries and identified 30 religious themes versus 2 secular ones for the period 1450–1500 and 49 versus 36 respectively in 1500–1550. It seems necessary to pursue this line of research and to define the criteria more explicitly